
Digital Cameras for the motorbike

Posted by pjessen - 2008/04/18 10:54

http://www.coloradobeemers.org/images/fbfiles/images/G9_pic.jpg Just finished a maddening search for the perfect camera not only for general use, but also specifically for the motorbike on tour.

The search starts when two old standbys, a Nikon and a Canon, both decide to die. Well worn, slow, and heavy, but they were paid for and worked as well as when new. Then they died a predictable death. A known defect in both cases; but wait! There's a solution for both send them in to the manufacturer, and they will be healed!! (For a minimum \$250 charge, they will fix it, and send you back that same well worn, slow, heavy chunk!)

Okay, for \$250, I see I can get a plethora of shiny new bobbles that will take pictures. Which one? There are over 200 models for sale at any one time, and with Canon (for example) turning out over 20 models PER YEAR, it is nearly impossible to keep up with them.

Go to <http://www.stevesdigicams.com> and <http://www.dpreview.com>, and you will be overwhelmed by the number of reviews...and how similar the reviews sound! There are other sources of reliable info if you use them with a grain of salt...the reviews of the camera. Amazon and other sites have a number of reviews written by buyers of the equipment. If it is good to so/so, the reviews will be raves. If the product is bad, the reviews will be vitriolic!

There are a couple of things you want for general use and for motorbike use: First, skim through the reviews and see what they think about the image quality. If that sucks, go to another model even if you can't get it in pink! Remember, the primary reason to buy a camera is to capture a good image. This eliminates many of the \$175 class grinders, but so be it. And also, some of the \$300 nuggets that profess tremendous (Leica) lens are eliminated because of noise at almost all settings.

Second, it must be useable with heavy winter leather gloves! This may be a bit of a stretch, until you try to use some of the shiny ones that more resemble a Zippo lighter than a camera. They might look good in your wife's "go to the concert" purse, but you, with your fat gloves hiding fat fingers working with weak eyes, in the dust or rain, will very soon train yourself to leave that frustrating trinket in the tank bag!

You are looking for a good image from a maneuverable body that has no-brainer controls for most settings, a quick turn-on time, and a robust body that closes into itself when turned off to protect itself from the ravishes of nature onboard a bike.

You can Google and read until you turn blue with all the stats available, but you can't heft and hold it. You can Best Buy it; hoist, hold and heft until you're sick of it, but no specs or knowledgeable salesman are to be had at the store. You need to do both, then order over the internet...no sales tax, a better price, same warranty, and delivered to your door. Or Craigslist.

Good luck on your search. For me, I ended up with a Canon G9. \$500 at Best Buy, \$400 on the internet, or \$300 on Craigslist. I've found it works...with Gloves! YRMV

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Re:Digital Cameras for the motorbike

Posted by Ken - 2008/04/18 14:19

I find my big old klunky 1.3 megapixel Sony takes better pictures than my newer small inexpensive 4 megapixel HP camera. It's gotta be the lens... so I mostly use the HP because of small size.

Pete, Are you using a mount and taking pictures on the fly, or mostly stopping to shoot?

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Re:Digital Cameras for the motorbike

Posted by pjessen - 2008/04/18 17:58

I've tried the mount with IS camera's, and the success rate of getting a good image is low. Video works better, but they run 30 images per second, so they have a better average. Also, if you shoot video from a helmet, you've eliminated much of the shake of the engine and suspension. There may be those who get decent shots, but it probably needs to be on a fast manual setting. Your camera is also susceptible to rain and bugs.

So far, I prefer to leave it in the tank bag, stop and get a few great shots; then move on again. Its safer for you and the camera. JMHO

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